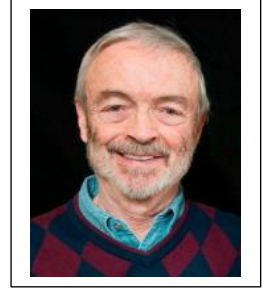


February 1, 2022

A “behind-the-scenes” Spirit Award goes to **Charles Seibert** for his quiet but never-ending support of St. John’s Sanctuary and Immigration Team. SIT leaders take on initiatives as members of the Immigrant Dignity Coalition of Greater Cincinnati, organize volunteers to distribute food to immigrant families with the Willows Project, and provide major support to the sanctuary at our neighboring Methodist church, among other things. Since SIT started in 2017, Charles has attended every SIT meeting as well as those of the Immigrant Dignity Coalition and has taken all the meetings’ notes.



A lifelong philosophy professor, Charles came to us from the UU congregation in Evanston, IL, in 1994 to teach at UC. Being an active principal in many St. John’s groups like the meditation group, Thursday Theology, the worship committee, the men’s group, and many others, Charles has proved his leadership skills. He has led many adult education groups: several World Religions courses (one lasting for four years) and classes about UUism topics such as the Seven Principles and many others. Because of that, he knows that those taking a smaller supporting role in any church endeavor make a big difference, too. In defending, supporting, and protecting the dignity of those who flee oppression and harm, the little jobs are especially important. Thank you for being willing to do them, Charles.

March 8, 2022

A Spirit Award of the open heart goes most deservedly to **Tom and Mary Darnar**. From the 1990 inception of St. John’s Partnership Church program, they have grown and nurtured St. John’s relationship with the Unitarian Church in Nyaradszentlaszlo, Romania.



In 1994, they traveled to Transylvania to meet Rev. Kiss and the Szentlaszlo congregation. The Romanian people had just overthrown their communist regime after years of oppression and poverty. Our group was inspired by the courage it had taken to keep their church open and their faith strong in the face of such repression. The Darners received a heartwarming, rich outpouring of hospitality from the St. Laszlo Unitarians who saved for months to host their overseas friends.

Since then, there have been many trips back and forth to Transylvania. Some have been small groups and some quite large (the St. John’s choir in 2001 and a St. John’s anniversary trip in 2014), but all were meticulously orchestrated in both directions by Tom. No wonder Rev. Kiss considered Tom his brother!

Various St. John’s fund-raising projects, initiated and implemented by Mary, Tom and the team, have ensued. For 17 years, the entire church participated in elegant church dinners. A young boy and girl were chosen annually to greet guests in the traditional folk costumes Mary purchased on that first trip. The church’s teens served, and all worked tirelessly from set-up to shut down.

Soup and bread donation lunches, even cookbook sales, have continued to raise funds to renovate St. Laszlo’s and continue its upkeep. Mary has brought back beautifully embroidered linens to sell to supplement families’ incomes. A Community Center was funded which the people built themselves, and we continue to provide a nourishing loaf of locally baked bread each week to the elderly members of the congregation.

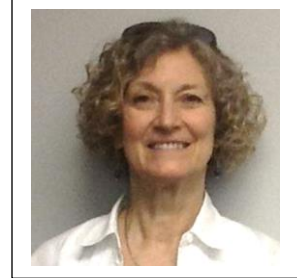
For 32 years, Tom and Mary have engendered a legacy of cultural understanding, appreciation, and respect between our communities. As our world now views how precious freedom is in that region of the world, we are doubly grateful for all they have accomplished.

April 12, 2022

A Spirit Award goes to **Pamela Wilz** whose work embodies the second principle, so much needed at this time in history. Pamela is a certified trainer and facilitator in Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Currently, she is offering her popular 4-week introduction to the skills of NVC to church members and to the community for no charge.

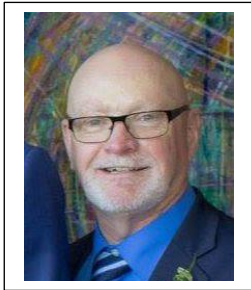
In the past, as a graduate of UU's weeklong leadership course, she has served various times as board president and as worship associate. Her contributions to the community include being program manager for the "Every Child Succeeds" program and participation in the fundraiser, "Fight for Air Climb," benefiting the American Lung Association.

Pamela has hosted a very popular St. John's auction event. She opened her home for a candlelit labyrinth walk in her backyard that was followed by a soup and bread supper - an evening that truly nourished both the body and the soul. She's also traveled with Barbara Hadden on her frequent trips to France and Barbara proclaims her as probably the easiest person to talk to she's ever met. Merci beaucoup, Pamela, for all you have contributed to St. John's. Tu es tres magnifique!



April 28, 2022

Before face masks were fashion accessories and jerry-rigged tablets made services available to home-bound parishioners, there was one smiling face busily working buttons and levers at the back of the church. This spirit award goes to **Bill Surber** for the years he spent making sure we all were able to hear the beautiful sounds of our choir and the provocative questions and soothing words of our minister.



Now that we have new AV Equipment and many energetic volunteers to make sure that our church services are heard online as well as in the sanctuary, Bill is still in the back, training two new volunteers for his post, and coordinating sound levels with our dream streaming team.

For those of you who don't know, Bill also takes the photographs lining our membership wall in Krollfifer Hall which helps us get to know each other better. Besides making us look good for the camera, Bill also enjoys taking photos of places and things he finds interesting. A retired Carthage bar owner, he dotes on his daughter and grandchildren and is ready to help others when he can. In the words of one St. Johner, "Besides the sublimely practical things Bill does, he also

goes through the world collecting wonderful, amusing observations and anecdotes that he shares." Share on, Bill; we appreciate you.

May 17, 2022

As we enjoy the benefits of our new AV equipment, we owe a special Spirit Award to the Dream Stream Team co-producer, **Monica Pellman**. An imperturbable presence behind the sound/AV desk, she wears a tranquil smile while managing the numerous screens, dials and switches that control the stellar streaming Sunday service that St. John's now projects to the world. She's been a part of the tech and communication team since the projects were E-news and the website, and she stepped up when presenting an online service became necessary. She was an usher on Zoom, then helped the team manage the collection of phones, tablets and computers it took to run live service on Zoom, as well as taking over the scheduling of team members and creating slides and tech rundowns since fall.

When the new AV equipment finally arrived, she volunteered to learn how to run it with Claire. If you saw the complex setup behind the desk, you would be astounded that they managed to pilot us into live streaming after only two training sessions.



But then, applying her time and talent to St. John's is no new effort for Monica, she has held many volunteer positions at church. She was part of the religious education program, she worked the welcome table, and was on the Church Board, among other things. Professionally, Monica is a senior manager with responsibilities involving in-game sports scoring statistics software and more.

Thank you, Monica, for helping provide lights, camera, and action at church.

May 31, 2022

Our current Spirit Award goes to someone described as a wonderful gift to St. John's, **Pat Brown**. A relatively new member to the church, Pat came to Cincinnati in 2018 knowing only one person. Her friendly nature and outgoing personality quickly remedied that.



Having been a longtime UU in NJ and NY, Pat was soon involved in or heading up many activities at St. John's: the Movie Club, LAFs, the Greeter and Welcoming teams, to name a few. She has been providing members with transportation to church and other important activities and she was recently appointed to serve as a representative of St. John's to UUCGC, the UU Council of Greater Cincinnati.

Pat's mostly significant contribution to St John's, however, has been her leadership of the Membership Team. In spite of the challenges of Covid-19 closures and masking restrictions, she and her team have been instrumental in bringing 25 new members forward to sign St John's Membership Book. That bears repeating – 25 new members have been welcomed into the congregation under the leadership of Pat Brown – a truly remarkable accomplishment!

One of the definitions of the word 'gifted' is having a special ability. Pat Brown's special ability is her gift of making each new visitor feel not like a stranger but like a friend she has just met. We at St. John's feel 'gifted' to have her in our midst. Many thanks to you, Pat, 25 times over.

June 14, 2022

A mammoth Spirit Award goes to the team who managed the congregational meeting this year. The board deserves special commendation for developing a budget that addressed rising costs against decreased pledges. Still, the budget cuts resulted in a lengthy discussion.

While members in the sanctuary and online may have tired of the marathon, the real effort came from the people working in front and behind the scenes. They planned and prepared ahead of time, came early, did their best patiently, and left late.

For your commitment, diligence, and indefatigability, we want to thank (in alphabetical order) **Debbie Combs, Matthew Cowperthwait, Bill Gordon, Nancy Henry, Edie Holder, Dirk Iwema, Mike Johnson, Mike Neugent, Erna Olafson, Monica Pellman, Matthew Peterson, Joetta Prost, Alicia Rosselot, Kathy Shell, Brian Snape, Claire Wagner, Chris Wagner, and Zoe Waldridge**. (Photo: Edie and Erna at the sign-in table; Dirk and Claire in the back with AV.)

